

is. One pays for one's sin, and then one pays again, and all one's life one pays. You must never know that.—
As for me, if suffering be an expiation, then at this moment I have expiated all my faults, whatever they have been; for to-night you have made a heart in one who had it not, made it and broken it.—But let that pass. I may have wrecked my own life, but I will not let you wreck yours. You—why, you are a mere girl, you would be lost. You haven't got the kind of brains that enables a woman to get back. You have neither the wit nor the courage. You couldn't stand dishonour! No! Go back, Lady Windermere, to the husband who loves you, whom you love. You have a child. Lady Windermere. Go back to that child who even now, in pain or in joy, may be calling to you. *[Lady Windermere rises.]* God gave you that child. He will require from you that you make his life fine, that you watch over him. What answer will you make to God if his life is ruined through you? Back to your house, Lady Windermere—your husband loves you! He has never swerved for a moment from the love he bears you. But even if he had a thousand loves, you must stay with your child. If he was harsh to you, you must stay with your child. If he ill-treated you, you must stay with your child. If he abandoned you, your place is with your child.

[Lady Windermere bursts into tears and buries her face in her hands.]

[Rushing to her.] Lady Windermere!

Lady Windermere. *[Holding out her hands to her, helplessly, as a child might do.]* Take me home. Take me home.

Mrs. Erlynne. *[Is about to embrace her. Then restrains herself.]* There is a look of wonderful joy in her face. Come! Where is your cloak? *[Getting it from sofa.]* Here. Put it on. Come at once! *[They go to the door.]*

Lady Windermere. Stop! Don't you hear voices?

Mrs. Erlynne. No, no! There is no one!

Lady Windermere. Yes, there is! Listen! Oh! that is my husband's voice! He is coming in! Save me! Oh, it's some plot! You have sent for him. *[Voices outside.]*

Mrs* Erlynne. Silence! I'm here to save you, if I can. But I fear it is too late! There! *[Points to the curtain across the window.]* The first chance you have, slip out, if you ever get a chance!

Lady Windermere. But you?